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NEW YORK TIMES
20 July 1982

British Called Tight-Lipped On Details of Espionage Case

By LESLIE H. GELB

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 19 — United States intelligence officials said today that the British Government had not provided American officials with any details about an espionage case involving top secret communications intelligence.

"We simply don't know what's going on," one high-level intelligence officer said. "The British are being tight-lipped about it all, perhaps not to jeopardize prosecution."

Reagan Administration officials said that all they had heard from the British so far was that they had arrested a man named Geoffrey Arthur Prime, a taxi driver, who apparently had worked in the Government Communications Headquarters in Cheltenham.

The headquarters is the hub of the British intelligence communications network and is responsible for sending intelligence communications and monitoring messages and communications to and from foreign countries. It performs functions similar to those of the National Security Agency in the United States.

Mr. Prime was arraigned last Thursday on an espionage charge described by the British prosecutor as "of the gravest possible nature."

Administration intelligence officials said that so far as they know, Mr. Prime was employed by the British communications agency until 1975. The formal charges against Mr. Prime, however, cite conduct by him "prejudicial to the safety and interests of the state" that "might be, or was intended to be, directly or indirectly useful to the enemy," from Jan. 1, 1968 to Dec. 31, 1981.

The Administration officials con-



United Press International

Geoffrey Arthur Prime in custody near London on espionage charges.

cluded from this that other British intelligence workers were probably involved in the suspected espionage.

Mrs. Thatcher to Make Statement

Special to The New York Times

LONDON, July 19 — Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher plans to make a statement in the House of Commons on Tuesday in response to reports that a major new spy scandal is about to be disclosed.

Since Friday, fears have been growing among members of Parliament that security at the Government's communications headquarters at Cheltenham has been seriously breached.

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THE NEW YORK TIMES
18 JULY 1982

Espionage Scandal Of 'Gravest' Nature Reported in Britain

LONDON, July 17 (AP) — British officials are investigating a major espionage case involving poor security at a top secret communications station, British news organizations said today.

The Times of London said the case involved the Government Communications Headquarters at Cheltenham, 90 miles northwest of London.

The headquarters controls a worldwide network of communications and

surveillance stations monitoring millions of international messages that code and language specialists analyze. Cheltenham also maintains security links with Britain's allies, including the United States.

The reports followed the arraignment Thursday of Geoffrey Arthur Prime of Cheltenham on an espionage charge described by prosecutor David Matthews as being "of the gravest possible nature."

Details were not disclosed, but the formal charge states that Mr. Prime "between Jan. 1, 1968, and Dec. 31, 1981, in England for purposes prejudicial to the safety and interest of the state, communicated to other persons information which was calculated to be or might be, or was intended to be, directly or indi-

rectly useful to an enemy."

The Sun reported that the information related to leaks from Cheltenham. The Daily Telegraph described the defendant as a former employee at Cheltenham.

Mr. Prime, 44 years old, was ordered held in custody. Judicial proceedings were delayed until Nov. 26. He is expected to be tried at London's Old Bailey Central Criminal Court.

The Financial Times said Cabinet ministers feared the incident "could develop into the biggest scandal since Kim Philby."

Mr. Philby, a leading member of Britain's intelligence services, fled to Moscow in 1963 after revealing scores of agents around the world to the Soviet Union.

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THE BALTIMORE SUN
18 JULY 1982

Major new spy scandal rumored in Britain

London (AP)—A major new spy scandal reportedly involving lax security at a top-secret communications station is buzzing through government circles and worrying Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, the British press said yesterday.

The London Times said the reports circulating among high officials center on the Government Communications Headquarters at Cheltenham, 90 miles northwest of London.

The headquarters controls a worldwide network of communications and surveillance stations monitoring millions of international messages which code-breakers and language experts analyze for intelligence. Cheltenham also maintains security links with British allies, including the United States.

The reports follow the arraignment Thursday of Geoffrey Arthur Prime, of Cheltenham, on an espionage charge described by prosecutor David Matthews as being "of the gravest possible nature."

Details were not disclosed, but the formal charge states that Mr. Prime "between January 1, 1968, and December 31, 1981, in England for purposes prejudicial to the safety and interest of the state, communicated to other persons information which was calculated to be or might be, or was intended to be, directly or indirectly useful to an enemy."

The Sun newspaper reported the information related to purported leaks from Cheltenham. The Daily Telegraph described the Russian-speaking defendant as a former employee there.

Mr. Prime, 44, was ordered held in custody and his trial proceedings were delayed until November 26.

Last month Mr. Prime was charged with indecent assault on girls aged 13 to 16 between April, 1980, and April, 1982.

He will likely be tried on the espionage charges at London's Old Bailey Central Criminal Court, officials said.

The Financial Times said government ministers fear the affair "could develop into the biggest scandal since Kim Philby." Mr. Philby, a leading member of the British Secret Intelligence Service known as MI6, fled to Moscow in 1963 after he betrayed scores of agents around the world to the Soviets.

The British Broadcasting Corporation said Prime Minister Thatcher "is treating the possibility of a damaging new spy scandal extremely seriously."

Three members of Parliament have submitted questions for Mrs. Thatcher to answer in the House of Commons about security at Cheltenham, which the BBC described as "Britain's most secret intelligence establishment."

Duncan Campbell, a British journalist who specializes in security matters, said despite heavy security at Cheltenham, precautions against leaks are "very slack."

"Staff from the center gossip openly about their work in local pubs," he said. "I would not be surprised if secrets had been leaked accidentally in this way."

Britain has been rocked by spy scandals since the end of World War II. The most recent was last year when the late Sir Roger Hollis, director of the MI5 counter-intelligence agency from 1956 to 1965, was revealed as a possible Soviet spy.